

WHY DID GOD RAISE UP PHARAOH?

TEXT: EXODUS 9:13-21

Introduction:

1. This morning I would like to preach about Pharaoh. My message is entitled, “Why Did God Raise Up Pharaoh?” and the answer to that question is found in Exodus 9:16 and Romans 9:17.
2. “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Exodus 9:16).
3. “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” (Romans 9:17). God raised up Pharaoh...

I. THAT GOD’S NAME WOULD BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH (9:14-16).

1. Pharaoh died a terrible death. While pursuing the Israelites, the LORD drowned him and his army in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:26-31).
2. One preacher described the scene this way: “It is rather a ghastly and gruesome sight. There they lie, the soldiers of the once proud army of Egypt. They are in all sorts of positions, these dead men. Some have their heads pillowed peacefully upon their arms as if in sleep. Others have their hard faces half buried in the sand. Others still lie prone upon their backs with bits of seaweed in their hair and their sightless eyes staring in terror at nothing. They are very much alike, these corpses. But here is one that is different. Look at the rich costume in which it is dressed. Look at its bejeweled fingers. There is no crown upon its brow. There is no sceptre in that nerveless hand. Yet it is easy to guess that this corpse...was once a king. Yes, this is the body of Pharaoh, the one time ruler of Egypt. But here he lies today among the meanest of his soldiers. He is sprawled in unkingly fashion upon his face as if the sea had spit him out in sheer nausea and disgust...This ghastly piece of royal rottenness has not been thrown upon this shore by the hand of man. As we look at him we see in him a monument of the power of God. And strange to say, he is not a monument of God’s power to save and to keep and to utilize, but of God’s power to thwart and to disappoint and to wreck and to utterly destroy. And in his destruction God tells us that He has achieved His purpose” (Clovis G. Chappell).

3. Some might think that it was unfair of God to raise up Pharaoh, and then to destroy him.
4. But that would be a superficial understanding of Scripture. Psalm 136 begins by stating, “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Ps. 136:1).
5. The emphasis in Psalm 136 is on the mercy of God – “for his mercy endureth for ever” (vss. 1, 2, 3, etc. Cf. 136:15).
6. Some say God was merciful to the Israelites, but not to the Egyptians. That is not true. The Bible says, “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; cf. Rom. 2:11; 3:29; 10:12, 13).
7. Romans 11:32 says, God has “mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32). God does not want to send sinners to hell.
8. First Timothy 2:4 says, God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
9. Second Peter 3:9 says, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
10. But if men like Pharaoh reject the Gospel and turn their backs on God, they will certainly go straight to hell – but that will be their own fault, not God’s.
11. I quoted Romans 9:17 earlier, “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”
12. Some people have misinterpreted this passage in Romans 9. They say Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath “fitted to destruction” (9:22).
13. God does not fit men for destruction, because the Bible teaches God is merciful and longsuffering. Please note the words “endured with much longsuffering” (Rom. 9:22). The Bible says that God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).
14. The word “endured” (9:22) implies opportunity to repent. The word “endured” implies that the destruction was not God’s arbitrary choice, but theirs.
15. This same endurance teaches us that God was working – and still is working – not only to save the Jewish people from their sins, but also that He is carrying out a larger purpose – i.e., to save both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 9:23, 24, 30). This aspect of God’s program will be developed further in Romans 10 & 11.
16. God is longsuffering and merciful to all. He endures with patience and forbearance the wickedness and unbelief of hell-deserving sinners. Unsaved friend: do not try to wear out God’s patience. That is a foolish thing to do.
17. God raised up Pharaoh...

II. TO SHOW THAT GOD HATES PRIDE (EX. 9:17).

1. Pharaoh was a proud monarch. God blessed him in many ways. He had a vast kingdom, and it was given to him by God.
2. What Daniel the prophet said to proud King Nebuchadnezzar applies to all kings and prime ministers and presidents and rulers. “For the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Daniel 2:37).
3. Later on, Daniel said the same thing to Belshazzar, “O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour” (Dan. 5:18).
4. King Nebuchadnezzar was proud, and so God had to humble him. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this when he said, “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37).
5. Pharaoh also acknowledged that he was a proud sinner, but his repentance was not sincere (Ex. 9:27-35).
6. God raised up Pharaoh to show the world that He hates pride.
7. Proverbs 6:16, 17 says, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood...”
8. Notice “a proud look” is listed first.
9. Proverbs 15:25 says, “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud.” The LORD destroyed Pharaoh’s house (Ex. 12:29).
10. Proverbs 16:5 says, “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”
11. For God to be true to His Word, He had to punish Pharaoh. He had given him many warnings, but Pharaoh would not listen to God.
12. Nehemiah 9:10 says, the LORD “shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.”

III. TO GIVE SINNERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT

1. The Lord gave Pharaoh many opportunities to repent. Even Pharaoh’s magicians tried to warn him but he wouldn’t listen to them (Ex. 8:19).
2. Isn’t that something? Pharaoh listened to the magicians when they counseled him to do wrong, but he turned a deaf ear to them when they counseled him to do right.

3. I mentioned earlier that some have misinterpreted Romans 9:22. They say Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath “fitted to destruction” by God (9:22).
4. But God does not fit men for destruction. The Bible teaches men fit themselves for destruction.
5. Many years ago, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached this text and he said these words: “I speak with the deepest sorrow when I ask the question, with the probability, nay, the almost certainty that it must be answered in the affirmative – Are there not some of you here present, who are being fitted for destruction? God is not fitting you, you are fitting yourselves, by daily developing and indulging the depravity of your heart. You are seeking out every new pleasure, and every new sin, and though often warned to turn from your course of evil, are there not some of you who are rushing headlong to destruction? Are not many of you by a course of sin and folly, ripening yourselves for the great harvest of the Lord? Are you not making yourselves ready to be as stubble fully dried, cast into the oven of His wrath? This is not to be laid to the charge of God, but at your own door the guilt must lie” (*New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. 6).
6. In the original Greek language, the verb “fitted” is in the middle voice, meaning they fitted themselves for destruction.
7. Good Bible study books point this out. For example, Vine says, “Here the middle voice signifies that those referred to fitted themselves for destruction (as illustrated in the case of Pharaoh...)”
8. The expanded edition of the Ryrie Study Bible says they were “ripe for destruction because of their own actions of rejecting the truth.”
9. Psalm 136:15 says, “But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.”
10. Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea because he rejected God (cf. Exodus 5:1, 2). But God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to repent.
11. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Lord loved Pharaoh no less than He loved Moses.
12. The Lord loved Judas Iscariot. After Judas betrayed Jesus, our Lord said unto him, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50).
13. He was giving Judas another opportunity to repent. Whatever failure Judas made of his life, and whatever failure Pharaoh made of his life, and whatever failure any of us make with our lives, it was not because God forced us to do so (cf. Acts 2:23).
14. “In whatever way we go wrong, we do not do so because God planned that we should. We do it because of our own willfulness and wicked rebellion against God” (Clovis G. Chappell).
15. God could not force Pharaoh to do right. And God cannot force us to do right.

CONCLUSION:

1. There is an important word found many times in the story of Pharaoh – “harden” (Ex. 4:21; 7:3, 13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17).
2. It is also referred to elsewhere in the Bible. First Samuel 6:6 says, “Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?”
3. Romans 9:18 says, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”
4. Proverbs 29:1 says, “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”
5. Pharaoh was often reprov'd, but he defied God.
6. Sin and unbelief cause hearts to get hard. At first the LORD allows this stubbornness and defiance to be manifested, but eventually He confirms a person in that hardness.
7. Then it is too late – they “shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”
8. This is why God raised up Pharaoh (Ex. 9:16).

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